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QUESTION OF PALESTINE
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE WHOLE
QUESTION OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS
IN ALL THEIR ASPECTS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 8 October 1998 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Yesterday, despite ongoing diplomatic efforts aimed at rescuing the peace process and recurrent appeals for a cessation of actions that pre-empt final status negotiations and severely damage the peace process, the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, announced further construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory. More radically, in a step tantamount to a de facto annexation, the Prime Minister announced the transformation of a settlement into a city.

At a settlement called "Ariel", which is located in the West Bank, Mr. Netanyahu declared, "We are building and will continue to build". The Prime Minister was there participating in a ceremony conferring city status on the settlement. In this regard, he stated, "When we declare Ariel as a city, as we do today, we thus announce that this is a permanent place. This place will be part of Israel in any final status agreement in the future". Further, he stated, "I would like to see Ariel double in size. We will continue at this pace and build up this city more and more and more".

All Israeli settlement activities are illegal under international law. They violate the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, numerous Security Council resolutions and the resolutions of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly. The step of de facto annexation, however, is even more dangerous and necessitates immediate condemnation by the international community. The actions and the statements made by the Prime Minister in this regard are absolutely unacceptable, they have no legal validity and they do not and cannot change the status of the occupied territory.

In addition, yesterday, in the city of Al-Khalil (Hebron), a cornerstone was laid by the Israeli occupying authorities for future construction of a settlement in Tel Rumeida. This illegal, provocative act comes at a time of increasing tension and conflict in the city, including the criminal activities of Israeli settlers. Just yesterday, a Palestinian youth, twenty-one year old Amjad Al-Natshe, was killed by Israeli troops during clashes in Al-Khalil. More than twenty other Palestinians were also injured during those clashes.

These are serious developments, which require the attention of, and action by, the Security Council and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I would be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 39, 40 and 85 of the fifty-third session, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dr. Nasser AL-KIDWA
Permanent Observer of Palestine
to the United Nations